Challenges and Opportunities Saskatchewan

Quality Education for Saskatchewan
March, 1989

The Hon. J. Gary Lane, Q.C.
Minister of Finance
Budget, 1989-90

89-02785/

Challenges and Opportunities

March 30, 1989

Honourable J. Gary Lane, Q.C.
Minister of Finance

This Progressive Conservative Government believes in Saskatchewan's future. By working with the people of this Province, we can undertake exciting new initiatives to make the future our own.

The 1989-90 Budget Address highlights many of the innovative measures that this Government will undertake in the coming year. These new initiatives will position Saskatchewan people to take up the challenges and opportunities presented by a world economy in transition.

This budget document provides the details of these initiatives. It demonstrates our determination to address the needs and aspirations of the Saskatchewan people. It demonstrates our commitment to take a comprehensive, coordinated approach to the development of the Province. It acknowledges the interdependent nature of our rural and urban communities and demonstrates our firm conviction that Saskatchewan must be seen as more than simply the sum of its parts.

The people of Saskatchewan are working together to build on their accomplishments. The initiatives described in this document enable us to build the foundation for a better tomorrow.

Hon. J. Gary Lane, Q.C.
Minister of Finance

Quality Education for Saskatchewan

Introduction

Education is the key to this Province's future. In a complex and rapidly changing world, the knowledge and skills of Saskatchewan people will determine our success in meeting the challenges of tomorrow.

Our students must be able to manage personal finances, make informed decisions, understand their rights and responsibilities as citizens and participate constructively in our market-based society. Our students must understand the world economy and its impact on their daily lives.

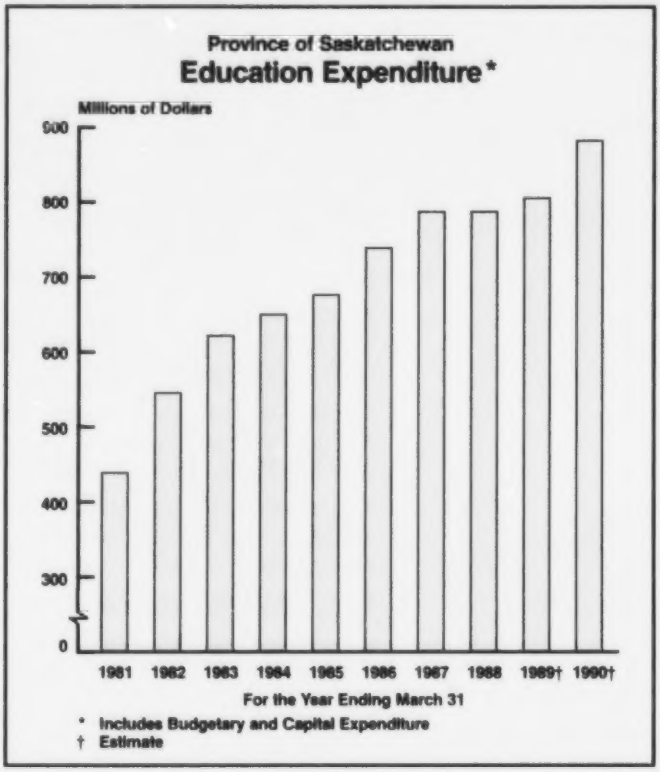
All children in Saskatchewan have the right to a high quality education. It is the best security they have in whatever they choose to do throughout their lives.

The Government is committed to further improvements in our educational system to ensure that all students get a solid foundation to prepare them for a lifetime of learning.

This Government will build on the strengths of our educational system to give Saskatchewan people even greater access to opportunities to learn.

Since 1982, this Government has:

- increased annual provincial funding to the Kindergarten through Grade 12 educational system by over $160 million, or 60 per cent;
- allocated over $360 million to the upgrading and building of new schools;
- increased annual provincial funding on post-secondary education by over $150 million, or 90 per cent; and,
- provided $130 million for student financial assistance with the number of students receiving assistance increasing from 5,600 to over 13,000.



In 1985, this Government established a longer term planning framework for our educational system. This included:

- the $150 million Education Development Fund to provide for educational improvement in schools; and,
- the $125 million University Renewal and Development Fund to renovate and build new post-secondary facilities.

The Government has also implemented important reforms in cooperation with all educators. Together, we have:

- undertaken a major review of the Kindergarten to Grade 12 educational system to implement a long-range plan for reform;
- reorganized our technical training and college systems;
- launched a province-wide campaign against adult illiteracy; and,
- introduced new programs and facilities to expand access to education for rural and northern residents.

Challenges

Saskatchewan has an excellent educational system. The people of this Province can be proud of our teachers and institutions and their efforts to ensure that Saskatchewan remains a leader in education.

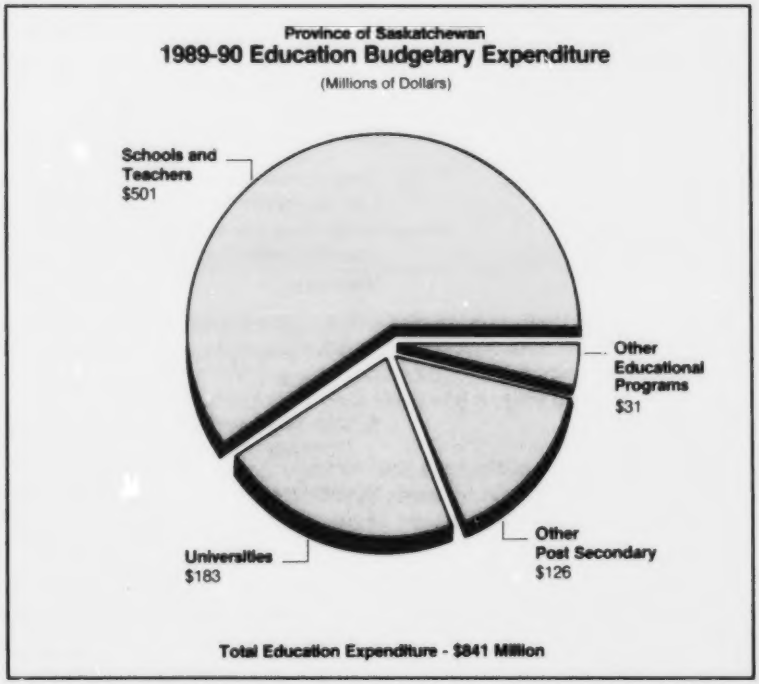
Technological change is creating new challenges and opportunities. Because of its effect on the social and economic structure of society, life-long learning is necessary for the continued success of this Province.

Our educational system must remain responsive to the changing demands of our society. **This Government will:**

- ensure that our school system provides every child with a sound basic education to prepare him or her for a lifetime of learning;
- introduce new initiatives to improve access for Saskatchewan adults who may have experienced educational barriers in the past; and,
- provide support to post-secondary institutions to build a strong base for quality programs in the arts and sciences, professional fields and skills training.

1989-90 Budget Highlights

Education is a high priority for this Government. **In 1989-90, over $841 million will be provided to support our education system. This represents a $52 million increase over last year's Budget. This funding level is nearly $370 million, or almost 80 per cent, higher than that provided at the beginning of this decade. This year, alone, nearly $14 million will be targeted for new initiatives to improve access to quality education.**



Capital Expenditure

Over $84 million is allocated for construction and renovation of educational facilities, for both the Kindergarten to Grade 12 and post-secondary systems.

These measures will ensure that Saskatchewan's high quality educational system will prepare our students for the year 2000 and beyond.

Basic Studies

This Government recognizes the importance of a solid foundation for life-long learning. Our schools and teachers are critical elements in this learning process.

Kindergarten to Grade 12

This Budget provides over $500 million for the support of the Kindergarten to Grade 12 educational system. These expenditures include:

- nearly $350 million for operating grants, an increase of almost $13 million from last year;
- over $56 million for teachers' pensions and benefits, an increase of $6 million over last year;
- $14.5 million from the Education Development Fund for special program improvements such as computer technology and resource materials; and,
- $4 million in new initiatives to implement education reform, including the expansion of the Core Curriculum.

In addition, nearly $31 million will be provided for construction and renovation of schools.

Teachers

Teachers are important to the development of our young people. Our students must continue to be taught by a high quality teaching staff. This Government has ensured that this requirement has been met by providing an attractive pay and benefits package to teachers. We have:

- provided a comprehensive benefits package, including a dental plan and options for retirement at full pension after 30 years of service;
- provided, in 1988, an early retirement option with full pension benefits in recognition of long-service teachers; and,
- provided for the financial security of teachers with over $19 million in incremental funding to the Teachers' Superannuation Fund, in 1988.

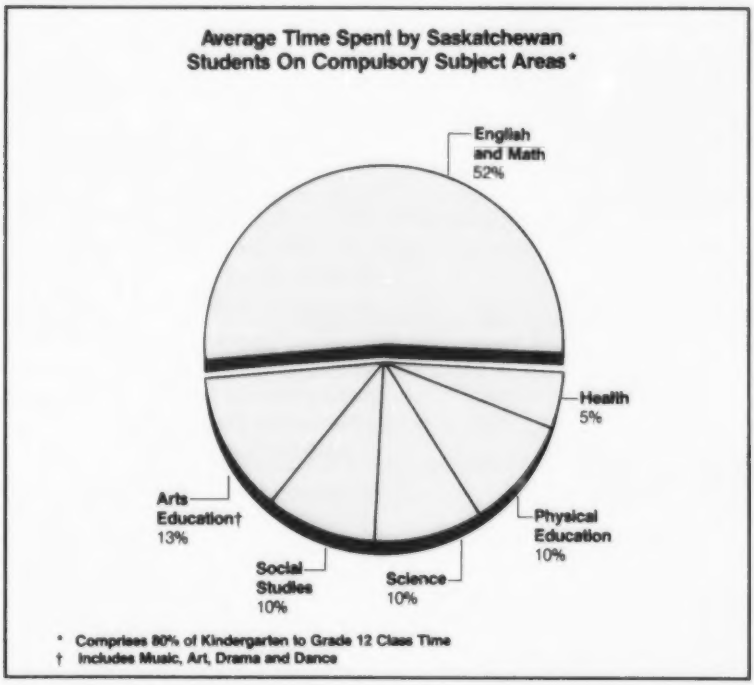
The pattern of successful negotiations and contract settlements which compare to the public sector at large is expected to continue in the future.

The Fundamentals

This Government is introducing a new Core Curriculum into our schools to prepare for the challenges of the future and provide our students with the necessary knowledge and skills to succeed.

The introduction of Core Curriculum is one of the most important changes to ever take place in Saskatchewan's public education system. To realize its full potential will require careful implementation over several years and a high level of commitment from the Government, school boards, teachers, parents and the public at large.

The new curriculum will place more emphasis on the fundamentals of education: reading, writing and mathematics. As well, students will study science, social studies, health education, physical education and the arts.


Average Time Spent by Saskatchewan Students On Compulsory Subject Areas*
English and Math 52%
Health 5%
Physical Education 10%
Science 10%
Social Studies 10%
Arts Education† 13%
* Comprises 80% of Kindergarten to Grade 12 Class Time
† Includes Music, Art, Drama and Dance

The teaching of essential skills such as independent learning, creative thinking, problem solving, communicating, and understanding our society and technology will complement the compulsory subject areas. These skills will enable our children to adapt to a rapidly changing world.

The Core Curriculum recognizes that each child has unique needs. The curriculum allows flexibility to meet individual needs through teaching methods and programs to serve all children.

In this Budget, $4.3 million will be allocated to develop the curriculum for use in classrooms and to continue teacher training. This represents nearly a 140 per cent increase in the last two years and is a clear demonstration of this Government's commitment to quality education for our children.

An additional $665,000 will be available to follow up on recommendations made by the Minister of Education's Advisory Committee on Evaluation and Monitoring in Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education to ensure that we are meeting our goals.

Staying in School

Our students must complete their education to be assured future success. Over the last 30 years, the percentage of students who graduate from Grade 12 has steadily improved in Saskatchewan.

This accomplishment is a tribute to our teachers and our schools. They have introduced educational methods and programs that respond to children's needs, abilities and interests.

Many of these efforts in our schools have been supported by the Education Development Fund. School boards have undertaken a wide range of initiatives to help students succeed in completing school. Computer-assisted learning, remedial help, student counselling services, alternative education and programs for native students are a few examples of these efforts. Still, approximately 30 per cent of Saskatchewan students leave school before completing Grade 12.

Students leave school early for a variety of reasons: family or social problems, lack of interest or the appeal of a job. For many, the advantages of dropping out are often short-lived. Without Grade 12, it is becoming more difficult to find meaningful employment.

In today's world, Grade 12 graduation is a doorway to higher education, the job market and a full participation in our society. A renewed effort is needed to reduce drop-out rates.

Northern Education Task Force

Because drop-out rates for northern students are far higher than the provincial average, their educational needs are of particular concern. Last year, the Government commissioned a Northern Education Task Force to examine the special challenges of education in the North.

This year, the Government will allocate new funding to improve student success in completing school and to address the recommendations of the Task Force.

Native Programs

Programs for students of native ancestry are a major priority. Our schools must respect the unique cultural heritage of native students to enable them to achieve their full academic potential.

In 1984, this Government initiated a five-year plan to address the special needs of native students. Support will be continued for this initiative through an allocation of nearly $300,000 for native curriculum and language development.

Saskatchewan Education supports 19 community schools in cooperation with school divisions in Regina, Saskatoon and Prince Albert. The Community School Program is designed to improve native student achievement by involving more parents and other community residents in school activities.

The Government will build on this success by working with school boards and the native community to develop strategies to help native students stay in school. **In 1989-90, over $6 million will be devoted to educational services and programs for native children.**

Province-wide Effort

The Government, educators, parents and the community must work together to help all children succeed in completing school. **To this end, the Government will initiate a province-wide effort to focus attention and resources on drop-out prevention and its contributing factors.**

Innovative approaches that involve parents, businesses and community groups will be developed. New ways will be sought to respond to the social and personal needs of children. **The Government's new $1.0 million drug and alcohol awareness and prevention strategy will be part of this effort by:**

- providing parents and teachers with assistance to recognize and deal with substance abuse;
- developing a substance abuse curriculum for use in our schools; and,
- working with school boards to develop policies on dealing with drug offenders.

Substance abuse can be prevented by providing our children with the confidence to say, "No!"

Literacy

It is estimated that one out of every ten Saskatchewan residents has difficulty in reading and writing. Illiteracy is a major handicap in today's society and job market. The ability of individuals to read and write has a significant impact on their capacity to participate fully in our changing society. By stressing the value of literacy skills with our children, we can prevent illiteracy in the future.

Reading Campaign

The Government has established a campaign to encourage reading. Through the cooperation of school boards, teachers and regional libraries, the Read - Use Your Imagination campaign emphasizes the enjoyment and benefits of reading for children and parents. **This campaign will be expanded in 1989-90.**

IBM - PALS

Government and business are also cooperating to make illiteracy part of the past.

Last year, the Government entered into a three-year $2.5 million agreement with IBM Canada Ltd. to introduce the Principle of the Alphabet Literacy System - PALS. IBM is providing computer hardware, software and support services for 96 computer stations at eight locations throughout the Province. Four mobile units are also being established.

IBM - PALS will allow thousands of Saskatchewan residents to improve their reading and writing skills. This project represents the first major application of computer-assisted literacy training in Canada.

Saskatchewan Literacy Council

In 1987, this Government established the Saskatchewan Literacy Council to launch a major campaign for adult literacy. Thousands of volunteers across the Province are making a difference teaching adults to read and write. **In this Budget, over $1.0 million will be allocated to continue this campaign.**

International Literacy Year

In recognition of the global significance of this problem, 1990 has been designated as International Literacy Year. Saskatchewan is in the forefront of the fight for literacy. The Government, in cooperation with educators and volunteers throughout this Province, has implemented innovative programs to attain literacy.

This Government's efforts to reduce drop-out rates, combined with these reading skills initiatives, will help prevent illiteracy in the future.

Post-Secondary Education

Saskatchewan people, from all walks of life and regions of the Province, want ready access to high quality post-secondary education. High school students preparing for their future careers, professionals and trades persons needing to update their skills and people re-entering the labour force are among those seeking opportunities for higher education.

Today, more Saskatchewan people are placing increasing demands on our post-secondary education institutions.

- Over 50 per cent of our high school graduates now go on to post-secondary studies.
- Enrollments at both universities have expanded by almost 70 per cent in the past decade.
- Enrollments in skills training programs have increased by 20 per cent since 1982.

In total, 20 per cent of the working-age population was enrolled in educational programs during 1988-89.

This year, the Government will meet these demands by providing:

- almost $150 million in operating grants to our two universities;
- almost $70 million to the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST);
- over $53 million for capital improvements and facilities at all post-secondary institutions, including the College of Agriculture Building in Saskatoon; and,
- up to $10 million for a new University and Institute Enhancement Fund.

In addition, $24 million will be allocated toward skills training and distance education programs delivered through our regional college system and SIAST.

Preparing for The Year 2000

Our post-secondary education system must respond to the needs of the people of the Province. **The Government has demonstrated its leadership by taking steps to ensure that Saskatchewan students are ready for the future.**

- SIAST was created to ensure high quality skills training at each of its four campuses.
- The Regional Colleges were created with a new mandate to offer university and skills training programs, as well as adult basic education and literacy training.
- The Northlands Career College was established specifically to emphasize access to employment-directed training for Northerners.
- The Distance Education Council was established to develop and coordinate the delivery of university, skills training and other educational programs in smaller centres, through the use of telecommunications.
- The International Languages Institute was established at the University of Regina to provide training in a diverse range of languages.

Skills Training

This Government supports a wide range of programs which provide educational upgrading and practical vocational training.

In some instances, programs have been specifically designed for the disadvantaged learner. Last year, a program was introduced at the Kelsey Campus of SIAST to assist the hearing-impaired to prepare for further post-secondary training. In 1984, the Saskatchewan Skills Development Program (SSDP) was introduced to provide skills training opportunities for unemployed persons eligible for social assistance benefits.

SSDP builds on cooperation among government departments, regional colleges and SIAST. Adult Basic Education classes are provided throughout the Province. In addition, technical vocational programs are available in a variety of fields, particularly in the area of pre-trades training. Since it began in 1984, over 12,000 individuals have participated in SSDP.

This year, $6 million will be allocated to provide training for a further 2,400 individuals under this Program. In total, over $21 million is allocated for skills training programs in 1989-90.

Student Assistance

Access to higher education and skills training programs should not be determined by a student's ability to pay. Educational institutions must be accessible to all who are qualified and who desire to learn.

This Government has substantially increased funding for student assistance programs. **In this Budget, $45 million will be made available for student assistance, a full ten-fold increase since 1982.**

This Government also recognizes that some students have greater financial needs than others. Since the Special Incentive Program was introduced in 1986, over 8,500 single parents, natives and people with disabilities have benefited by receiving over $22 million in forgivable provincial loans. Their success is our reward.

The University and Institute Enhancement Fund

This Government recognizes that increased accessibility to university education should not be limited to the university campus alone. **The Issues and Options Accessibility Task Force at the University of Saskatchewan has also expressed this view in noting that:**

> *"Increased accessibility to a university education need not necessarily be provided on the campus of the University of Saskatchewan itself. It might come through extension teaching and distance education technology, ... regional colleges and technical institutes."*

This year, the universities will be asked to develop a coordinated first-year and second-year Arts and Science program for delivery through the regional college system. This will ensure access to quality educational programs in rural and Northern Saskatchewan.

In 1989-90, up to $10 million will be provided for program renewal at the two universities and SIAST. The objective in setting up this University and Institute Enhancement Fund is to maintain high quality programs in the arts and sciences, professional fields and skills training. **The Fund will allocate as much as $3.0 million to SIAST and up to $7.0 million to the universities to help them prepare for the future. This is in addition to nearly $220 million that will be provided this year to both universities and SIAST for their general operations.**

Distance Education

The Government has provided ongoing support to distance education by making university extension and institute courses available to rural Saskatchewan. The new regional college system has played a major role in making these programs more accessible.

Students can now take advantage of the opportunities provided by new technology, such as fibre optics and satellite systems, as well as correspondence classes. **Last year, over 250 university courses were made available to 33 communities throughout Saskatchewan.**

SCAN

Through modern technology, all regions of this Province will have access to the advantages of distance education. **This Government is developing the most comprehensive distance education system in Canada under the guidance of the Saskatchewan Communications Advanced Network (SCAN) Authority.**

SCAN will begin broadcasting as an educational and information network in 1990. It will provide increased access to information on a wide variety of topics including agriculture, health, culture and education.

SCAN's five-year goal is to provide access to learning opportunities and information to almost every Saskatchewan resident.

Conclusion

Access to quality education is vital to the continued success of this Province. This Government will ensure that educational programs are in place for the people of Saskatchewan so that they can meet the challenges and opportunities that the future is sure to bring.